

May 30, 2001

National Institute of Mental Health Workforce Plan: FY 2002-2003

In the five years that Dr. Steven Hyman has served as Director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the Institute has engaged in a concerted effort to identify and focus on those scientific research areas that will most strongly support the NIMH's mission to reduce the burden of mental illness through research on mind, brain, and behavior. NIMH also has been very cognizant that achievement of the strategic goals and objectives of these scientific programs requires the utilization of workforce planning to ensure that the appropriate quantity and quality of human resources are available.

A prime example of strategic planning and its link to workforce planning has occurred in the NIMH intramural research program (IRP). Over the last several years, the IRP has gone through a major restructuring based on the recommendations of the Intramural Research Program Planning Committee ("Blue Ribbon Panel"), a group of nationally recognized neuroscientists, behavioral scientists, and mental health clinicians who examined the overall structure, operations, and potential of the IRP. As the recommendations of the Committee have been implemented, less productive labs have been down-sized or closed and several large programs have transitioned out of the IRP. The resources gained from these efforts (space, budget, and FTEs) have been used to revitalize research programs into the causes and treatments of mental disorders, per the mission of the NIMH and the IRP.

At the forefront of these changes has been a major reorganization and expansion of research on mood and anxiety disorders, including creation of new labs and outside recruitment of several renowned senior investigators. Other areas of increased emphasis include brain imaging and the creation of "core" facilities to be shared by multiple labs and branches. Some of these core facilities include shared resources for neuroimaging and bioinformatics (the use of computer science and technology to address problems in biology and medicine), which also will be shared with the extramural community. The IRP also is involved in planning for a new National Neuroscience Research Center laboratory building to be erected on the NIH Campus. It will be shared with NINDS and several other brain focused institutes, and promote collaborations in translational research on the brain in neurological, perceptual, and psychiatric disorders.

NIMH recognized that successful implementation of these new scientific priorities and collaborative efforts would require a different mix of skills in its workforce. As a result, vacancies in the NIMH IRP became part of a carefully constructed multi-year revamping plan. Over the past several years, vacancies have been created and filled according to a detailed reorganization plan that will enter its final phase of staff recruitment in FY 2002. Recruitment efforts in FY 2002 will focus on the hiring of 12 senior investigators and 36 associated doctoral and technical staff. The remainder of IRP hiring in FY 2002 and FY 2003 will focus on filling high priority vacancies stemming from projected retirements and other turnover, in order to maintain the momentum of our reorganization efforts. In filling these vacancies, NIMH will focus on hiring those staff whose skills will facilitate the achievement of the Institute's current

scientific goals and objectives, and who will have the flexibility to develop new skills and take on new tasks as these goals and objectives continue to evolve.

Strategic and workforce planning also have been utilized in the NIMH extramural program. In the five year period from FY 1995 to FY 2000, NIMH extramural research grant and contract funding increased 63%, while Research Management and Support (RMS) discretionary funds increased by only 5% after payment of central taps and assessments, representing a significant decrease in real purchasing power after the payment of mandatory federal salary adjustments and other inflationary cost increases. To cope with this increase in workload while administrative support resources declined in constant dollars, NIMH implemented strict budgetary controls while both reorganizing and reducing staff (9% decrease in RMS FTEs during this period).

At the same time, new areas of emphasis have been developing, illustrated by the following:

- C In response to Congressional mandates, an Institute of Medicine Report, and a growing public interest in NIMH research, the NIMH continues to expand its activities in the areas of science education and public liaison. For example, the NIMH has created an award-winning website to disseminate science-based information to a worldwide public. In a recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, the NIMH website received extremely high marks for the accuracy and completeness of its information on depression. The website was initiated in 1996, and now receives over 6 million “hits” per month, contains over 3,000 documents, and has 5,000 subscribers. In the public liaison area, the NIMH has conducted a highly successful series of public meetings (in Alaska, Texas, Illinois, and Pennsylvania) to increase public input and planning for NIMH’s research agenda. The NIMH continues to provide staff and financial support for an Annual NIMH Research Roundtable of public health interest group members, as well as recent Surgeon General’s Reports on Youth Violence, Suicide and Mental Health, plus two more now in preparation on Child Mental Health, and Racial and Ethnic Minority Mental Health.
- C The NIMH Advisory Council has greatly expanded its role and functions in the past few years. For example, the Council has established new Workgroups to gather and analyze information in such important areas as parity, genetics, behavioral science, minority training, and the NIMH’s research portfolio balance. Council also has been more active in informing NIMH of its strategic needs and recommending program shifts and new opportunities. In response to these Council actions and recommendations, NIMH staff have been challenged to redirect their research portfolios and to develop new initiatives via Requests for Applications (RFAs), Requests for Proposals (RFPs), major new clinical trials, and an expanding number of Consensus Conferences.

Rather than increasing its extramural staff to conduct these and other new activities, NIMH plans to focus, in FY 2002 and FY 2003 (assuming success in meeting its FY 2001 FTE targets), on utilizing projected vacancies to hire employees who have both the skills essential for these new areas of emphasis and the flexibility to deal with future changes. NIMH will consider the use of any available mechanisms - e.g., recruiting, relocation, and retention bonuses, telecommuting and other flexible workplace programs, loan repayments, and child care subsidies - to both recruit

and retain the most qualified employees. NIMH also intends to continue to increase its use of technology and to enhance its training and performance management programs in order to increase the productivity of its staff. NIMH will continue to evaluate both its scientific and administrative programs and, where streamlining of staff is found to be appropriate, will investigate opportunities for the use of early outs, buyouts, and/or contracting out.

NIMH Hiring Plans for FYs 2002/2003

	FY 2002	FY 2003	Total
INTRAMURAL			
Senior Investigators ¹	0	2	2
Investigators ¹	13	3	16
Other MD/PhDs, in FTE positions	26	16	42
Other MD/PhDs in non-FTE positions (IRTA, VF)	37	28	65
Other lab/clinical staff => GS-13	17	8	25
Other lab/clinical staff =< GS-12	32	24	56
Admin/support staff => GS-13	2	2	4
Admin/support staff =< GS-12	13	14	27
Infrastructure support => GS-13	0	0	0
Infrastructure support =< GS-12 ²	0	0	0
Summer and other temps not listed above (include summer IRTAs)	40	40	80
TOTAL INTRAMURAL	180	137	317
EXTRAMURAL			
HSAs/SRAs and other senior level science administrators => GS-13	13	13	26
Other science administration positions =< GS-12	2	2	4
Grants Management and R&D Contract Staff => GS-13 ³	3	3	6
Grants Management and R&D Contract Staff =< GS-12 ³	3	3	6
Administrative and support staff => GS-13	4	4	8
Administrative and support staff =< GS-12	15	15	30
Infrastructure support => GS-13	0	0	0
Infrastructure support =< GS-12 ²	0	0	0
Summer and other temps not listed above	10	10	20
TOTAL EXTRAMURAL	50	50	100
IC TOTAL	230	187	417
¹ Using OIR professional designations			
² Include all wage grade positions related to infrastructure in this group			
³ Includes 1101, 1102, 301 and 303 series where individual is engaged in these activities on a full-time basis.			